

[25th July, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) the total Optic Fibre Cable Network in the country is approx 1,83,032 Rkms out of which 1,77,172 Rkms belongs to DOT, 2921 1,83,032 Rkms to Railway and 2939 Rkms to Power Grid Corporation. In Addition, Optical Fibre Networks have been commissioned by some private telecom operators in their operating areas.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir, DOT has a plan to add 1,00,000 *Kms* to this Optic Fibre Network during the year 2000-2001.

BI-Monthly Billing System

193. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state: _____

whether it is a *fact* that the earlier system of bi-monthly billing was convenient to the customers and was widely popular;

if so, the reason for converting it to monthly system of billing;

whether it is a fact that monthly billing system causes inconvenience and time consuming for payments;

what steps are being taken to reintroduce bi-monthly billing system; and

if so, by when it will be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) The system of bi-monthly billing has not been done away with, however, field units have been given flexibility to issue monthly bills *in* favour of high calling subscribers for making convenient to them to pay the bills and also to ensure early recovery of large amounts of public money.

(c) No, Sir. No instance of a complaint on this ground has come to *notice*.

(d) and (e) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Privatisation of International Call Segments

194. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering privatisation of International Call segments;

(b) whether all aspects of National Security are being considered while taking a decision in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details of the safeguards on national security being considered therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) National Telecom Policy 99 envisages the review of opening up of International telephony service to competition by the year 2004.

(b) and (c) Does not arise at present in view of (a) above.

Long distance Telephony to Private Parties

195. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

whether Government have any plan to open long distance telephony to private parties;

if so, by when such plan will be disclosed;

how many parties will be permitted to enter the business, apart from VSNL;

whether long distance telephony by opened to foreign investors; and

if so, the percentage of equity that will be permitted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes sir,

(b) By 15th August 2000

(c) The competition is proposed to be open with restriction on the number of players.

(d) yes Sir, In collaboration with Indian companies.

(e) Government proposes to keep foreign equity cap of 49%.